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ABSTRACT

The situations and attitudes of a total of 15 teachers and former teachers were investigated as part of a followup study conducted four years after a study at the completion of the teachers' first year of teaching. Using many of the same questions as in "The First Year Teacher Study," interviews were conducted, and three survey instruments were completed focusing on adult developmental issues. The interviews revealed perceptions in six areas: (1) descriptions of teachers' present career and personal life situations; (2) importance of teaching; (3) high and low periods during the five years; (4) ideal vision of self in career and life style, and congruency with the present ideal; (5) career expectations; and (6) participation in the research study. Ten of the fifteen teachers had altered their initial career choice in some way, reflecting discomfort with the initially chosen life structure. A relatively low commitment to the profession was seen. Choices made in the areas of occupation and marriage/family appeared to be influential in distinguishing between the teachers who felt congruence with their ideal vision and those whose ideal was incongruent or who had no ideal vision. While many expressed a greater inclination to remain in education than had been evident in their first year, the demands of the classroom seemed to be on a collision course with the demands of home and personal life. (FG)

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Teachers in Their Fifth Year: an Analysis of Teaching Concerns from the Perspectives of Adult and Career Development

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While the first year of teaching has enjoyed increasing attention in the literature, the teacher of five years perhaps halfway through career expectancy appears not to have caught the notice of most researchers. The purpose of this investigation was to describe the present situation of fith year teachers and former teachers and to report their perceptions of the personal importance of teaching, reflections of the last five years, career expectations, and congruency of career and life style with early visions. The impressions of participants regarding their involvement in research on teaching was also an aspect of investigation. The research reported here is part of a larger comparison study following up 15 participants originally the foci of The First Year Teacher Study (Ryan, et.al., the Ohio State University, 1977). Both The First Year Teacher Study and Teachers in Their Fifth Year involved intensive interviewing with the sample which represented a cross-section of grade level taught, subject taught, type of school, and sex of teacher.

The initial part of this report describes the research methodology employed in the study, Teachers in Their Fifth Year. The second section discusses categories most productive in describing the situation and future projections from the sample five years following their initiation in the teaching profession.

Teachers in Their Fifth Year, an Analysis of Teaching Concerns from the Perspectives of Adult and Career Development

Introduction

"The first year is the worst." echoes in the ears of teacher inductees and for some provides a rationale for the problems and struggles of the initiation into a demanding profession. But after the first year teachers find little consolation in slogans or assistance from colleagues in many cases. These novice educators are presumed to quickly become seasoned professionals expected by the public to have gone through it all at least once by year two. What happens after that first year that shapes the view teachers hold of the profession and themselves? How do the perceptions of teaching concerns change with increasing years of experience? What are the perceptions of teaching and self as teacher that former teachers hold having left after one, two, three or four years of experience?

With new federal pension legislation providing assurance of retirement benefits with ten years experience, many teachers may find themselves at five years service halfway through a teaching career. Yet the midcareer or fifth year teacher has rarely been described in the literature. Selected recent research studies have examined teacher career development as related to teaching concerns. Adams and Martray (1980), Burden (1979), Farrah (1977), Gehrke (1979), Newman(1978), and Peterson (1978) utilized teacher self report techniques, survey or interviewing, to more clearly elucidate phases or stages in career apparent to teachers. The majority of these studies have been slice-in-time research reporting the perceptions of teachers after X years of experience. Natalie Gehrke (1978) has pursued a longitudinal study

of teacher role personalization and relationships through first, third, fourth, and fifth year interviews with ten secondary teachers. Clearly if accurate descriptions of the changes in teacher perceptions are to be captured such longitudinal or follow-up studies are essential. The rosy glow of reflection may be avoided with these approaches.

Teachers in Their Fifth Year is a follow-up study of 15 subjects of The First Year Teacher Study (Ryan, et.al., 1977). Teachers in Their Fifth Year utilizes interviewing and constant comparative analysis to describe participant perceptions of teaching concerns and adult developmental issues and to compare these to the perceptions stated as first year teachers. The follow-up nature of the study, unusual in the literature, is accomplished by comparing interview data recorded during the teachers' first year of teaching with interview data acquired four years later using and extending the original research questions and interview guides.

Purposes and Questions

Teachers in Their Fifth Year is based on the assumption that a follow-up, comparison study of teachers could aid in clarifying the issues of teacher career development, adult development of teachers, and changes in the perceptions of self and teaching issues and concerns. Among the questions addressed are a number of defined areas of investigation including, examination of career patterns of teachers, clarification of changes in perceptions of self and teaching issues, relation of adult developmental stage issues to teaching concerns, and exploration of reasons why some of the original group of teachers investigated in The First Year Study (Ryan, K. et.al., 1977) have left the profession.

The follow-up and comparative design of the study necessitated the incorporation of research questions from The First Year Teacher Study as well as questions pertinent to adult and career development over time. The research questions are as follows:

First Year Teacher Study

1. What are the first (fifth) year teacher's perceptions of himself/herself?
2. What are the first (fifth) year teacher's perceptions of himself/herself as teacher?
3. What happens in the classroom and elsewhere in the school that the teacher perceives as successes and as failures?
4. What are the new (fifth year) teacher's perceptions of students, administrators, fellow teachers, their teacher educators, and parents?

Teachers in Their Fifth Year

1. How do teacher perceptions of problem areas and their own strengths and weaknesses change over time?
2. In what respects, if any, do teachers perceive they have changed their teaching-related beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes throughout their years of service?
3. To what factors do they attribute their changes?
4. Do teacher relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents change as teacher experience increases?
5. What level of commitment to teaching have teachers with five years of experience reached as indicated by decision to persist?
6. What are fifth year teacher's perceptions of self in relation to to five areas of adult development-relations with spouse/significant other, relations with own parents, importance of friends, reflections on high and low periods of the past five years and congruency with ideal vision of self in career and life style?

Methodology

Ascertaining that the concerns of teaching remain the same or change during a teaching career is best accomplished with longitudinal or follow-up research. Determining that teaching as a career offers little development

or growth or describing what teachers identify as career growth is best viewed with an extended perspective. Describing the adult development of the three million job holders called teachers requires recording their self reports of successes, problems, career importance, life style, and family/friends significance as the sample of teachers live out their lives. Teachers in Their Fifth Year attempts to examine the teaching concerns, career development and adult development of teachers with a longitudinal comparison approach not previously utilized to investigate these variables.

Building on the findings of The First Year Teacher Study, Teachers in Their Fifth Year utilized intensive interviewing with 15 of the original sample of 18 teachers during the spring of 1981, five years from their initiation as first year teachers. Original interview schedules were used with modifications to eliminate unproductive questions and extend original variables through inclusion of adult developmental issues. Administration of Fuller and Bown's and George's Teacher Concerns Questionnaire, Ryan's Teacher Preparation Attitude Inventory, and the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory provided additional insights into the picture of the sample as teachers and former teachers.

All thirty five categories resulting from constant comparative qualitative analysis (Glaser, B. in G.J. McCall and J.L. Simmons, eds., 1969) in The First Year Teacher were used and expanded through the addition of five adult developmental issues categories emerging through analysis of interview transcripts from Teachers in Their Fifth Year. Fifth year data from the following categories are summarized in Section II of this study: Description of Present Situation-Career and Personal Life, Importance of Teaching to the Participant, Perceptions of Career High and Low Periods of the Past Five Years, Ideal Vision of Self in

Career and Life Style, Congruency with Ideal at Present, Career Expectations, and Impressions of Participation in Research.

Sample. The sample of 18 teachers from The First Year Teacher Study was selected to represent a cross section of grade level taught, subject taught, type of school, and sex of teacher. One of the original teacher participants left teaching during the first year but the remainder persisted in teaching and the study throughout that first year.

Prior to release of data from The First Year Teacher Study to this researcher, the original study researchers contacted the participants to request their participation in Teachers in Their Fifth Year. Of the original sample, 15 indicated a willingness to participate and were subsequently contacted by phone by this researcher to arrange two interview appointments.

The final sample for Teachers in Their Fifth Year consisted of 15 teachers and former teachers. Six taught or had taught in the elementary grades (K-5), 3 in the middle grades (6-9), and 6 at the senior high level (10-12). Twelve of the 15 were or had been regular classroom teachers, teaching such subjects as mathematics, physical education, and foreign languages, or such grades as second, third, or fourth. Three were or had been special classroom teachers in career centers or learning disabilities or EMR programs.

Ten of the teachers taught or had taught in suburban schools, three in rural schools, and two in urban schools. Two teachers were teaching or had taught in parochial schools, 1 in a private school, and 12 in public schools.

Procedures. The 15 participants , teachers and former teachers, were

interviewed twice between April 20 and June 22, 1981. The majority of questions in the two interview schedules were taken directly from The First Year Teacher Study interview schedules so that first and fifth year data could be directly compared. Additional questions focusing on adult developmental issues were added to more clearly delineate changes in participants' careers, life styles, and self concepts over time. Participants also completed three instruments previously cited during this period. During the interviews participants were asked to respond initially from the perspective of the fifth year of experience and, in the second interview, with reflection upon their teaching careers, varying from one to five years of teaching.

Investigator. During the period of the study, the researcher was an advanced doctoral student with eight years experience in secondary public school teaching. Principle adviser to the researcher was one of the original research team, Dr. Kevin Ryan, the Ohio State University.

Perceptions of Teaching Career and Adult Developmental Issues

of Fifth Year Teachers and Former Teachers

Impressions of Participation in Research

Problem Area

R.W. White advocating biographical interviewing stated,"There can be no adequate substitute for the obvious procedure of asking the subject to tell all that he can about himself and his environment" (1976, p.88). The changes in perceptions of teachers over time cannot be extrapolated from studies of first year teachers. Researchers must return to the subjects time and again to ask participants to consider present situations and reflect on past experiences in order to accurately describe the experience of the teaching career through increasing years of experience.

How do teachers of five years of experience and former teachers with one to four years of teaching experience describe the course of the last five years? Where are they now in occupational settings and how do they evaluate their progress against formerly held ideal visions of self in career and life style? What personal importance does teaching hold for the participants? What projections for career and life style two, five, and ten years hence do they plan? Interviews with participants of The First Year Teacher Study and Teachers in Their Fifth Year revealed perceptions in these areas and their impressions of participation in both research studies.

Research Questions

The research questions for this section of the larger study are as follows:

1. What is the present career and life style situation of the fifth year teacher or former teacher?
2. What is the teacher's or former teacher's perception of the importance of teaching as a career for him/her?

3. How would the teacher or former teacher chart the past five years in terms of career high and low periods?

4. What (if any) was the ideal vision of self in career and life style held by the teacher or former teacher and how would he/she describe present congruency with that ideal vision?

5. What career expectations does the teacher or former teacher hold for two, five, and ten years hence?

6. What are the perceptions of the teacher or former teacher regarding participation in research?

Method of Analysis

Data were gathered during two structured, tape-recorded interviews between April 20 and June 22, 1981. Interview responses were transcribed onto cards and grouped into categories based on the major research questions. As previously stated, the research questions of Teachers in Their Fifth Year include those of The First Year Teacher Study and career and adult developmental issues appropriate for a follow-up study of this nature. Therefore, the 33 categories developed from interview responses to the original interview questions were used to categorize Teachers in Their Fifth Year responses with the addition of 5 categories regarding career and adult developmental concerns. The following ten categories deal most closely with the foci of this paper, perceptions of self in career and life style and impressions of research participation.

a. description of present situation, career and personal life

b. importance of teaching to the fifth year teacher or former teacher

c. career expectations

d. reasons for becoming a teacher and possible influences

e. teaching as a career, changes over five year period

f. evaluation of self as teacher

g. perceptions of self changes

h. perceptions of career and personal high and low periods of past five years

i. ideal vision of self in career and life style, congruency with ideal at present

j. perceptions of research involvement

Response cards of the categories listed above were examined for richness of data and complementary categories were again combined to more clearly delineate discrete concepts and eliminate categories with limited data. The following six topics resulting from this secondary analysis most clearly describe the foci of this study:

a. description of present situation, career and personal life

b. importance of teaching to the participant

c. perceptions of career high and low periods during past five years

d. ideal vision of self in career and life style, congruency with ideal at present

e. career expectations

f. perceptions of research involvement

Data from The First Year Teacher Study were used at this point to substantiate details provided by the participants. Space prohibits a complete comparison of each of the six topics with related perceptions expressed during The First Year Teacher Study. The summary reported below is derived primarily from interview responses from Teachers in Their Fifth Year.

Results

Description of Present Situation-Career. Of the 15 original study teachers who participated in Teachers in Their Fifth Year, only five remain in the same teaching situations-same school and grade or subject.

Two teachers have changed grade levels, one to higher, one to lower grade. Three teachers have obtained change of grade level or subject positions in new school settings, two as a result of relocations. Of the original 15 teachers, the remaining five have resigned from teaching voluntarily, all having been offered contracts for the succeeding year.

Changes or withdrawal from teaching were made after four years in the initial position by two teachers, after three years by three teachers, after two years by two teachers, and after one and one half and one year experience in their first assignment by one teacher each. Persistence in the initial teaching position or transfers to new positions were made as frequently by teachers of all levels. Only two teachers had taught in more than two schools, both having switched to substitute teaching due to relocations.

Description of Present Situation-Personal Life. Seven teachers were married prior to or during The First Year Teacher Study. Of the seven, three are divorced and one of these has since been remarried. Three teachers have been married during their second to fourth year of teaching and five remain single.

Two of the participants balanced child rearing and teaching during their early years of experience. Since their first year of teaching each of these has parented two children. One teacher has acquired two children through a recent marriage, one former teacher has a child three years of age, and one teacher gave birth to a baby girl three months after interview data was gathered.

Of the five teachers remaining single during the first and fifth year studies, four expressed dissatisfaction with their present marital-

significant other status. Two hoped to form a single lasting relationship within the next five years.

Importance of Teaching to the Participant. Responses to the question, "How important is it to you to teach?" were grouped into Highly Important, Moderately Important and Minimally Important categories. Of the 15, seven indicated that teaching was highly important to them and that they were not interested in leaving the education field at any time in the near future. Six of the seven expressed comfort in their present school and position. The seventh had returned to teaching from 1½ years in sales. He reflected on this stating, "The biggest mistake I made was leaving rather than changing grade levels."

Five teachers' perceptions of the importance of teaching were categorized as Moderately Important. Three of the five were or had been foreign language teachers who would prefer to find an occupation using their languages that brought similar satisfactions with higher pay. One teacher of the five was pregnant and did not wish to be a full time mother and full time teacher. The remaining teacher preferred teaching but felt her present situation was too demanding.

Three teachers felt that teaching was of Minimal or no Importance to them any longer. Two had entered other occupations, real estate and restaurant operations, which they found to be less problematic and one had returned to college to prepare for a career in geophysics.

A review of the responses to advantages and disadvantages of teaching questions, revealed no difference among teachers regarding the three categories of Importance of Teaching to the Participant. The personal reward of working with children was the advantage of teaching cited most

frequently overall. This advantage was named equally often by Highly and Moderately Important respondents. Low salary was the disadvantage mentioned most frequently by respondents across all three Importance of Teaching categories. No one other disadvantage or advantage received sufficient mention to be analyzed for respondents' categories.

Perceptions of Career High and Low Periods of the Past Five Years. In responding to the question, "As you reflect on your years in teaching, can you tell me how you felt about your teaching experience from the beginning year to the present?", participants were encouraged to describe a line graph of the past five years with any peaks or valleys they perceived. The line graphs on the following page (Table 1) were grouped by career subcategories-Teaching, Same Situation; Teaching, New Situation; and Not Teaching. Situational changes refers to changes in grade, level, subject, and/or school.

(Insert Table 1. here)

The comparison of graphed perceptions of career high and low periods indicates a continual improvement in teaching situation was reported more frequently by teachers who remained in the same teaching situation. The least positive perceptions of career were reported by two of the participants who are no longer teaching. Overall results of this category seem to indicate improved career satisfaction with experience with the fifth year described as best to date by nine of the fifteen participants. However, comparisons of this type are made cautiously due to the lack of a common characterization of "best" or "worst" year.

Table 1.

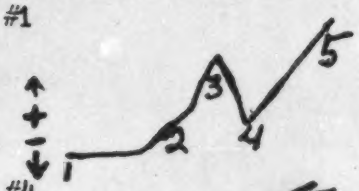
Perceptions of Career High and Low Periods of the Past Five Years

Career Satisfaction against Years

Teaching, Same Situation

Teacher

#1



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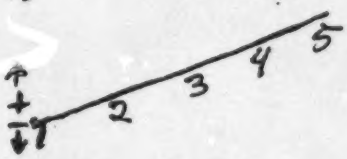

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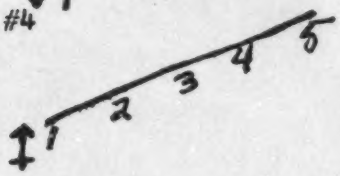

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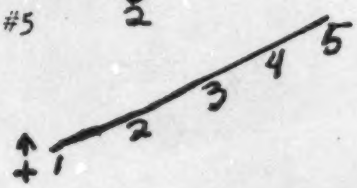
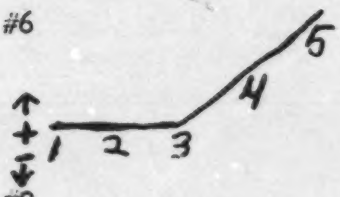


Teaching, New Situation

Teacher

#6



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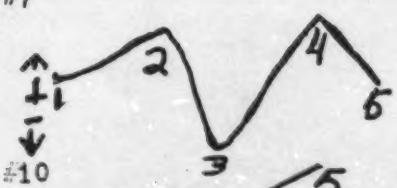

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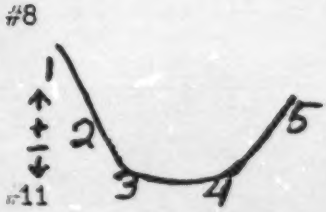

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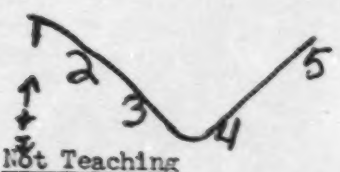

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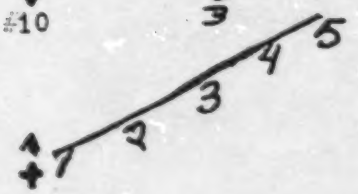

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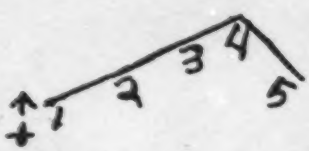
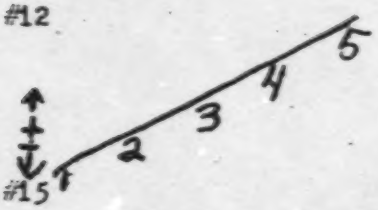


Not Teaching

Former Teacher

#12



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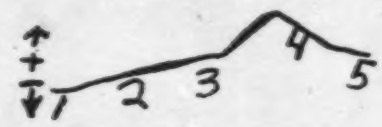

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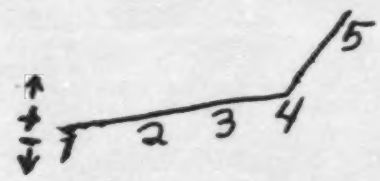

Ideal Vision of Self in Career and Life Style, Congruency with Ideal at Present. Results in the category of Ideal Vision of Self in Career and Life Style and Congruency with Ideal at Present were discerned from responses to the following questions scattered through both interviews: "If you had not entered teaching, what do you think you would have done? When and why did you pick teaching? Did you have an ideal vision of you in career and life style? How close have you come to that ideal at this point?".

Three subcategories emerged upon analysis of responses: Life Dream Teachers, Second Choice Teachers, and Forced Choice Teachers. Seven teachers described themselves as "always wanting to teach" and two of these could not remember ever considering other careers. The other five teachers in this Life Dream Teacher group had all made the firm decision to enter teaching during high school.

Second Choice Teachers were thus grouped because all six had originally aspired to different life roles and had pursued teaching after the occurrence of circumstances such as marriage or absence of marriage or dissatisfaction in first choice occupation. Four of the six majored in education in college.

The two Forced Choice Teachers were both foreign language teachers who had initially majored in the languages, acquired teaching certificates "just in case", and turned to teaching only after finding no employment opportunities in the region in their fields. Both remained interested in finding careers using languages outside of education.

Differences in levels taught and sex were equally represented in the three groups. One variable of interest amongst groups is persistence

in teaching. Six of the seven Life Dream Teachers are still teaching (one re-entered profession) whereas only three of six Second Choice Teachers and one of two Forced Choice Teachers are still in the profession. Age or point of time of decision to enter teaching increased with decreased priority of teaching as a career, ranging from high school or earlier for all Life Dream Teachers to after college for both Forced Choice and one Second Choice Teacher.

Congruency with Ideal at Present. Approximately half of the participants described themselves as having an ideal vision of self in career and life style or "the Dream" Levinson (1978) describes as "...a vague sense of self-in-adult world" formed in the novice phase of Early Adulthood and given greater definition throughout the period (p.91). Of the 15 teachers and former teachers, eight described themselves as congruent with what they had envisioned for this point in time in their lives. This view stemmed from satisfaction with present occupation and life style for two of the eight who stated they had had no vision and added comments such as "Whatever I'm doing, if I'm enjoying it, is right and on time."

Five of the eight expressing congruency with ideal vision had imagined themselves as teachers, married, and with certain material items such as a house, nice car, or boat. All women, three of the five were mentally grappling with reconciliation of children and a teaching career, uncertain as to the fit of that puzzle piece. The fourth was leaving full time teaching at least temporarily to raise a family. The fifth teacher had made the decision to have two children and preferred balancing home life and teaching.

The eighth congruent teacher had left teaching to enter sales for

a one and one half year period, gone through a divorce, and returned to teaching as a substitute teacher to fill a leave of absence vacancy. He described his career and life style as "... on the right track but behind schedule."

Seven participants described themselves as incongruent with the career and life style they had imagined or unhappy with present circumstances but lacking an ideal vision. Four of theseven had left teaching after from one to four years of experience and one anticipated resigning within two years.

Dissatisfaction with present occupation and/or life style was mentioned by five of the seven. For two women amongst the five this represented absence of marriage and children. One male and one female of the five were attempting to identify occupational and life style roles for themselves. The fifth, a male felt unable to resolve life style wants with financial woes of working in a parochial school and a part-time job.

Two of the self-described incongruent participants had left teaching and the marriages they were part of during The First Year Teacher Study. Both originally held visions or portions of visions of career that they were now enacting or preparing for (one as an undergraduate geophysicist in the making). Both women; they described the personal meaning of teaching differently. One had used it as a vehicle to gain the confidence and courage to leave an unhappy marriage. The other had been a Second Choice Teacher, resigned to supporting her husband through medical school and internship. Following four years of that life style, she had initiated a dissolution and redirected on her early vision of herself as a career person.

She described herself as happier than she had been in years and added that she "...went off on a side track, took a wrong turn" but was now on the right track but behind schedule.

Comparison of the career and life style patterns of those participants who described themselves as congruent with an ideal vision or lacking a vision but satisfied with those who indicated incongruence, one conclusion emerges. Marriage and teaching was evidently the image that many of the participants held initially. Those who are most congruent and to some extent more satisfied with present circumstances are those who have persisted in teaching and married. Those who describe themselves as incongruent are more often not teaching and/or divorced or never married.

Career Expectations. Participants were asked, "Where do you hope to be career-wise in two years, in five years, and in ten years?". Only two participants would prefer to be full time teachers for the next ten years or longer. Three of the 15 expect to be in education-related positions, such as learning disabilities tutor, school psychologist, or guidance counselor.

Seven of the eleven women mentioned child rearing as a concern for the near future and described the problems of trying to remain in the job market while at the same time taking leaves of absence. Six of the seven hoped to bounce in and out or return to education after their children were in school or adolescence.

Only one participant of those who had left teaching saw herself returning to the classroom if she could find a position. One teacher participant anticipates resigning from the profession within two years,

one within five years, and one within ten years.

Teaching may not be viewed as a career by the participants if a career is defined as a series of steps within a field with increasing responsibilities and rewards. No participant anticipated moving into educational administration, the route most similar to a true career in education. Many of the participants mentioned at some point in the interviews the attractiveness of teaching as a vehicle to blend job and family. Of the four males in the study, only one planned to remain a classroom teacher. One hoped to enter guidance counseling, one hoped to use foreign languages in business, and one had left teaching earlier for jobs in the restaurant field. Although salary was mentioned as a dissatisfaction by more of the participants than any other, only one participant planned to leave for greater financial rewards and none of those who had left teaching cited low salary as a major factor in the decision.

Impressions of Participation in Research. "Beneficial" may be the adjective which genuinely summarizes the responses of participants to "How do you view your participation in research?". Most mentioned the therapeutic effects of talking to another person about one's teaching as a way of thinking out problems, reflecting on questions one wouldn't have asked oneself, and releasing emotions bottled up from teaching situations. A few found it comforting to have someone observing their classes and some mentioned helpful suggestions and positive reinforcement from the researchers (The First Year Teacher Study).

Two confessed to a secret pleasure they received from knowing they were mentioned in publications. Two recalled being apprehensive prior

to The First Year Teacher Study but then recommended the experience for all first year teachers.

Two statements that best capture the expressions of all fifteen participants were: "I would never ask myself these questions and once you ask them and I start talking and thinking about them it pushes me in new directions " and "In this sea of faces that sometimes seemed like it was them against you, at times you felt like you had a friend sitting in the back of the room!" The participation in Teachers in Their Fifth Year of 15 of the original 17 teachers who finished that first year of teaching with The First Year Teacher Study also substantiates the positive experience that all described research involvement as being.

Conclusions. One conclusion cited about the participants in The First Year Teacher Study (Ryan, et.al., 1977) was their entrance into the profession of teaching with "...a very tentative professional commitment" (p. 24). The number of career changes made within their initial five years may support this early perception of the group. Only five of the 15 individuals participating in both studies have not altered their initial career choice in some way.

Developmentally, many of these changes and more to come may reflect discomfort with the initially chosen life structure. The participants in most cases have made choices in the two areas most central to "the novice phase" (Levinson, 1978), namely, occupation and marriage-family. The fit or misfit of these two life components appears to be the characteristic distinguishing between participants who felt congruence with ideal vision and those whose dream was incongruent with life situation or who had no ideal vision.

The career expectations held by the participants also reflect a relatively low commitment to the profession. While many expressed a greater inclination to remain in education than had been evident in their first year, the demands of the classroom and the personal demands of home and family seemed on a collision course. The participants may experience a number of changes in the next five years as they attempt to negotiate a stable life structure within or without teaching.

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